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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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***** SUPPLEMENT NO. 4 *****

TO

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENTS

in the

MEXICAN OUTBREAK OF FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE

With Supplementary Information
on United States Cooperation
in Control Measures

(Prepared January 28, 1947)



Note: This report has been prepared on the basis of best available information but is subject to revision and amplification as new facts are obtained. Additional supplemental reports will be issued as significant developments occur.

CAMPAIGN TO SUPPRESS FOOT-AND-MOUTH

DISEASE IN MEXICO BECOMES INTENSIVE

The arrival in Mexico of several carloads of power digging equipment, disinfectants, and other needed supplies, together with additional veterinarians, from the United States is stepping up the fight against foot-and-mouth disease into a full-scale offensive.

The officials in charge of the campaign* decided, at a series of meetings in Mexico City early in May, to use to the utmost all available resources including manpower, supplies, and funds. This policy, they declare, besides being scientifically sound is also the most economical from a business standpoint. The faster that infected and exposed animals can be destroyed, the less opportunity there is for the disease to spread and the more quickly it can be stamped out.

From the beginning of the outbreak, which was diagnosed last December, up to April 22, the eradication forces consisting chiefly of Mexican personnel slaughtered and buried about 18,000 animals. Slightly more than half of these were cattle, the remainder being sheep, swine, and goats. In addition, about 75,000 apparently healthy animals have been sent to slaughter in the main quarantine zone in southeastern Mexico in accordance with plans for reducing the numbers of susceptible livestock in that area. The total of about 93,000 animals represents an average slaughter on the premises, plus slaughter by evacuation, of about 775 head a day. The highest rate of slaughter on the premises has occurred since the latter part of March. The officials set have now a minimum goal, for field slaughter, of 1,000 head a day with the

* Note: Officials representing Mexico were: Lic. Oscar Flores, Tito Herrera, Dr. José Figueroa, Lic. Francisco Tovar, and Dr. Francisco Rubio Lozano. Those representing the United States were: Dr. H. S. Shahan, Dr. D. T. Sims, Don Stoops, and R. S. Triggs.

expectation of doubling or even tripling this number under favorable working conditions. An additional 1,000 head are to be evacuated for slaughter in accordance with the livestock-reduction program.

Oxen Replaced with Mules

Livestock owners have, for the most part, accepted the eradication program as necessary for their own future welfare. Fair appraisals and prompt payment of indemnities for animals destroyed have helped create a favorable sentiment and increased cooperation from livestock owners. An element that has further enhanced support of the program is the assistance being rendered by Mexican officials in replacing work oxen that are infected with foot-and-mouth disease with mules, which are not susceptible to this malady. This policy helps to sustain agricultural production.

Up to the first week in May, about 12,000 oxen had been destroyed because of foot-and-mouth disease but, through official assistance, these animals have already been partially replaced with about 5,000 mules. Estimates indicate a need for about 50,000 more mules to take the place of oxen to be destroyed because of the disease. The majority of those mules will be obtained from northern Mexican States. Mules of the cotton type, about 14 to 15 hands high, are considered most suitable for the purpose. Necessary supplies of harness, largely hand made, are being obtained. Through the usual procedure is to replace each ox with a mule, some Mexican farmers in the eradication areas are seeking to obtain tractors. Officials are assisting them also.

Eradication Strategy Involves "Squeeze Play"

During the next few weeks and months, the strategy of campaign officials is to concentrate efforts on destroying the several centers of infection that have appeared outside the main zone where the disease first occurred. Suppression of the infection in those outlying areas will reduce the danger to

(1) the non-infected areas of Mexico, principally in the northern states, and in Jalisco and Michoacan, (2) the United States, and (3) Guatemala and other Central American countries. The plans also include a reduction in the number of wild animals that are potential spreaders of infection. These and subsequent operations, according to the plans, will confine the disease to the present main area, which will then be subject to "squeeze-play" operations until eradication is complete.

Full Agreement on Policies

Agreement on all major policies and general methods of conducting field operations was reached by members of the Mexican-United States Commission for the Eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease which met in Mexico City. Besides the members of the Commission, there were also present technical advisors on problems involving personnel, equipment, transportation, finance, legal matters, and public relations. The keynote of the meetings was sounded by director Oscar Flores, representing Mexico, who concluded the discussion of most items on the agenda with the terse remark "It is agreed!"

The major policies governing the conduct of the campaign include the following:

An all-out intensive drive to eradicate the disease at the earliest possible date, with outlying centers of infection to receive the first attention.

Immediate strengthening of the quarantine.

Decision to exclude from the campaign the use of vaccines, alleged cures, or other treatments and to use only the time-tested methods of quarantine and slaughter that have fully demonstrated their effectiveness.

Supervision of expenditures through a system of joint Mexican-United States appraisals of condemned animals and other property, and reciprocal

inspection of accounts and records.

The fullest possible use of modern digging, disinfecting, and transportation equipment, including some use of airplanes for the quick movement of key personnel, records, and payrolls.

The disposal of more animals by slaughter and burial and a reduction in the number salvaged due, in the past, to lack of adequate burial facilities, a lack that is rapidly being overcome by the arrival of more mechanical equipment.

Agreement to permit representatives of Mexican livestock associations to serve as consultants in the appraisal of purebred and other improved stock.

Consultations with persons representing fighting-bull interests for the purpose of obtaining proper valuations on the four recognized classes of these animals.

Continued assistance to owners in the replacement of work oxen with mules or tractors, together with other measures for reducing the impact of the eradication program on the agricultural economy of the affected areas.

Seasoned Veterinarians Participating

To give United States participation in the joint campaign maximum effectiveness, the U. S. Department of Agriculture has assigned to duty in Mexico several of its most experienced veterinary specialists aided by a staff of younger veterinarians also of demonstrated ability and resourcefulness in field work. The United States group, which will work with their Mexican colleagues in supervising field activities, includes several veterans of former outbreaks of the disease in the United States. They are Dr. M. S. Shahan, co-director of the campaign, Dr. L. R. Noyes, Dr. F. H. Shigley, Dr. A. W. Rice, and Dr. A. E. Wardlow. The United States staff, early in May, included approximately 25 veterinarians, with more due to arrive shortly. An office force will largely relieve them of business and other routine administrative details. The operations include a system of full reports so that both countries may be reliably and periodically informed of the progress of the joint undertaking.